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SERVICE DATE - DECEMBER 28, 2001

DO

FR-4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 390X)]

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company—Abandonment Exemption—between Loving and Pecos Junction, NM, and between Pecos Junction, NM, and Rustler Springs, TX

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon a line of railroad between BNSF milepost 196.00 near Loving, NM, and milepost 217.20 near Pecos Junction, NM, and between milepost 0.00 near Pecos Junction, NM, and milepost 25.34 near Rustler Springs, TX, a total distance of 46.54 miles. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Codes 88256, 88263, and 79855.

Applicant has certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic to be rerouted; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government agency acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line is either pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment

shall be protected under Oregon Short Line R. Co–Abandonment–Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on January 29, 2002, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,¹ formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),² and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by January 9, 2002.

Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by January 22, 2002, with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: Michael Smith, Freeborn & Peters, 311 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 3000, Chicago, IL 60606-6677. If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

Applicant has filed a separate environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by January 4, 2002. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423-0001) or by calling

¹ The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

² Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

SEA, at (202) 565-1552. Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), BNSF shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by BNSF's filing of a notice of consummation by December 28, 2002, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "www.stb.dot.gov."

Decided: December 18, 2001.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary